

Exploring Primary School Pupils' Career Aspirations in Ibadan, Nigeria: A Qualitative Approach

ABSTRACT

Aspiration constitutes a significant social construct, encapsulating the forward-looking mental framework of an individual. Adapting the Social Cognitive Career Theory, this research aimed to delineate the factors influencing the career aspirations of primary school students in their final and penultimate years in Ibadan. Data were amassed via unstructured yet in-depth interviews with 48 pupils, who were chosen using a multi-stage sampling method from two distinct local government areas within Ibadan. Subsequent to collection, the data underwent transcription, coding, and thematic analysis. The study highlighted the prevalence of gender-stereotyped career choices. The research identified that environmental factors exert varying degrees of influence on the pupils' career aspirations, whereas perceived academic capabilities play a pivotal role in shaping these aspirations. Based on these findings, it is recommended to incorporate comprehensive career guidance and development programs within the primary education curriculum in Ibadan.

Keywords: *career aspirations, penultimate pupils, socioeconomic status, perceived academic ability, environmental factors*

Introduction

Background to the Study

Aspiration is a fundamental component for success, acting as a navigational beacon for behavior and maintaining motivation towards achieving personal goals. Individuals who hold higher aspirations often engage in rigorous study efforts to achieve the necessary grades for advancing their education, a behavior underscored by the inherent human pursuit of reward, both tangible and intangible (Khattab, 2015; Tafere, 2014). From an early age, people demonstrate a calculative nature, indicating the importance of understanding aspirations from youth. The development and maintenance of positive aspirations are critical for overcoming life's hurdles. They enable individuals to remain focused and motivated as they progress through different life stages. As people mature and encounter diverse experiences, their aspirations naturally evolve, driving their pursuit of specific objectives. The concept of aspiration, often conceptualized broadly, typically refers to the hope or ambition of attaining a particular goal, which in turn shapes individual efforts toward its realization.

Bernard and Taffesse (2012) suggest that aspirations reflect an individual's preferences, beliefs, and recognized limitations regarding their future, thereby linking present circumstances with future possibilities. This interconnection underscores the significance of understanding how aspirations develop from childhood. The impact of cultural and socio-economic factors on children's aspirations, especially in the context of Africa, is significant. Today's children, more than ever, are curious and expressive, qualities attributed to modernization and enhanced information access. This expressiveness is crucial in the foundational years provided by primary education, which aims to instill basic educational and moral principles in children, preparing them for future societal roles and personal challenges (Craft, 2012; NPE, 2004). Research indicates that children's aspirations, though sometimes perceived as unrealistic, are essential reflections of their future ambitions (Moulton, Flouri, Joshi, & Sullivan, 2015). These early aspirations, especially regarding careers and education, lay the groundwork for their future pathways. However, the aspirations of children, particularly in African settings, are influenced by their socio-economic environments, highlighting the diverse factors that shape these early ambitions (Ezeani, 2013; Abalaka et al 2023).

Parental involvement has been identified as a significant predictor of children's career aspirations. Active parental engagement in a child's academic life often leads to heightened aspirations and achievements (Ogbiji, 2018). Conversely, socioeconomic status (SES) can profoundly affect children's career goals, with lower SES linked to diminished aspirations (Alika & Egbochuku, 2009; Jamabo, 2014). Yet, studies like Tafere's (2015) reveal that children from less affluent backgrounds can still possess high levels of career aspirations, despite lacking the means to achieve them. The formation of children's aspirations, particularly within the educational framework of primary schools, necessitates a detailed examination. This study aims to explore the determinants that influence the aspirations of children in their final and penultimate years in selected primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State. By analyzing these factors, the study seeks to understand how children's aspirations are formed and what can be done to support and guide them toward positive future outcomes (Jacob & Wilder, 2010; Gupta & Bashir, 2017; Kaur, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

The development of career aspirations is complex, especially among children, with factors such as gender, peer influence, parental involvement, socioeconomic status, and environment playing significant roles (Alika & Egbochuku, 2009; Bugeja, 2010). Research has explored various aspects of individual learners' career aspirations and their influencing factors. Studies by Onwueme (1981) and Okonkwo (1991) have examined educational and occupational aspirations among high school seniors in different Nigerian contexts. Furthermore, research by Obiyo and Eze (2015) highlighted the impact of parental socioeconomic status on students' vocational aspirations, while Oluwatimilehin and Owoyele (2015) investigated contemporary high-profile career aspirations among senior secondary school students in Ogun State, Nigeria.

Additional studies, such as those by Ehigbor and Akinlosotu (2016) and Mayange and Umar (2018), have delved into the relationship between parents' occupations and students' career aspirations, as well as the factors affecting vocational aspirations in different Nigerian locales. Ogbiji (2018) focused specifically on the influence of parental socioeconomic status on the academic aspirations of students in Cross River State, Nigeria. However, a noticeable gap in the literature is the lack of focus on primary school pupils, particularly those in the final and penultimate years, and the specific factors influencing their career aspirations (Ehigbor & Akinlosotu, 2016; Mayange & Umar, 2018; Ogbiji, 2018).

The existing body of research predominantly concentrates on secondary school students and has been conducted in regions other than the one targeted by the current study. Additionally, previous studies have largely overlooked the use of qualitative methods that provide an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. There is a dearth of research utilizing interviews to understand the career aspirations of primary school pupils and the factors influencing these aspirations. This study, therefore, aims to fill this gap by exploring the career aspirations of primary school pupils in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, focusing specifically on those in their final and penultimate years (Obiyo & Eze, 2015; Oluwatimilehin & Owoyele, 2015).

Research Questions

The following research questions are designed to guide the study:

1. What are the career aspirations of the final and penultimate year pupils in the selected primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo state?
2. How does gender affect the career aspirations of the final and penultimate year pupils in the selected primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo state?
3. In what ways does socioeconomic status affect the career aspirations of the final and penultimate year pupils in the selected primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo state?
4. How does perceived academic ability and environmental factors influence the career aspirations of final and penultimate primary school pupils in Ibadan, Oyo state?
5. What is the role of teachers in the formation and actualization of the career aspirations of the final and penultimate year pupils in the selected primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo state?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to investigate the career aspirations of final and penultimate year pupils in the selected primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Identify the career aspirations of the final and penultimate pupils in the selected primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo state.
2. Investigate how gender affects the career aspirations of final and penultimate year pupils in the selected primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo state.
3. Determine how socioeconomic status affects the career aspirations of the final and penultimate pupils in the selected primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo state.
4. Discover how perceived academic ability and environmental factors affect the career aspirations of the final and penultimate pupils in the selected primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo state.
5. Find out the role of teachers in forming and actualizing the career aspirations of final and penultimate pupils in the selected primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo state.

Literature Review

Aspiration is a widely researched concept which has gained popularity across several fields of study. It has also been thoroughly dissected within the confines of several countries, with the aim to understand its different dimensions, applications and especially how it interplays with several factors identified in this study.

The concept of Aspiration

Sociological context emphasizes stratification's importance in economic sectors due to diverse goal structures (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). Aspirations, varying with information and experience, decline with children's growing awareness of life's possibilities and constraints (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). UKA (2015) sees aspirations as ranging from wishes to concrete plans, signifying a strong desire for achievement (UKA, 2015). According to Lewin's typology, "ideal" aspirations are crucial in early analysis, evolving into "real" ones with life's challenges (UKA, 2015).

Early childhood is critical for studying clear, yet possibly unrealistic, aspirations, highlighting the influence of socioeconomic status, parental values, and school engagement on children's future hopes (Moulton, 2016). Despite evolving views, parental aspirations or labor market conditions minimally affect children's career convictions (Kintrea, St Clair, & Houston, 2011). Uncertain aspirations lead to ambivalent educational attitudes, impacting later educational engagement and higher education enrollment (Gutman, Schoon, & Sabates, 2012). Flouri & Panourgia (2012) found maternal education impacts aspirations more than family poverty, suggesting aspirations aren't confined to socio-economic status (Flouri & Panourgia, 2012). Conversely, an Australian study showed while socioeconomic status influences higher education enrollment, it doesn't necessarily alter aspirations between different SES groups (Adebisi et al, 2023).

Career Aspirations

Career choices significantly impact both individual and societal futures, directly influencing global economic output (Kisilu, Kimani, & Kombo, 2012). These choices determine educational and career paths (Olaniyi, 2022). Children's career ambitions are shaped by daily activities and influences from adults, evolving from fantastical to more achievable goals as they age (Bugeja, 2010). Early career perceptions, influenced by societal and familial factors, affect future educational and career decisions (Chambers et al, 2018).

Furthermore, the study by Chambers et al. (2018) provided insights into the varying career aspirations across different countries, noting trends such as the inclination of boys towards traditionally masculine roles and girls towards roles seen as more feminine. Interestingly, the study also observed that children in developing countries tend to have more pragmatic and realistically achievable aspirations compared to their counterparts in developed countries, who often harbor more fantastical aspirations. This divergence underscores the impact of cultural, economic, and educational factors on children's career aspirations. Additionally, the research highlighted the significant influence of family and educators in shaping these aspirations, particularly when the children express interest in professions already present within their family or community environment (Chambers et al., 2018).

Gender and Career Aspirations

Gender stereotypes significantly influence career choices from an early age, with notable global effects (Elizabeth, 2012). Elizabeth (2012) highlights the underrepresentation of girls in STEM and prestigious fields, exacerbated in developing countries, where education paradoxically correlates with reduced career ambitions among girls (Elizabeth, 2012). The World Economic Forum and Chambers et al. (2018) stress the need for gender-neutral curriculums to combat the deeply ingrained job stereotypes affecting children, particularly girls (Chambers et al., 2018).

In Africa, patriarchal norms further limit girls' career perceptions, despite educational efforts (Elizabeth, 2012; Koskeii, Ngeno, & Simiyu, 2016). Gender roles, alongside parental education, significantly influence educational and career aspirations (Rampino & Taylor, 2013). Studies by Croft, Schmader, and Block (2015), and Beede et al. (2011), showcase global gender disparities in communal roles and STEM fields, highlighting occupational segregation (Croft, Schmader, & Block, 2015; Beede et al., 2011).

Mendez & Crawford (2002) and Platt & Parsons (2018) explore gender differences in career flexibility and aspirations, respectively, suggesting evolving attitudes (Mendez & Crawford, 2002; Platt & Parsons, 2018). However, societal and familial influences continue to shape these aspirations, underscoring the role of educators and parents in challenging established norms (Mutekwe, Modiba, & Maphosa, 2011; Phukan & Saikia, 2017). Despite cultural barriers, there's a shift towards more women prioritizing career ambitions, indicative of gradual societal changes (Patten & Parker, 2018).

Socioeconomic Status and Career Aspirations

Socioeconomic status combines economic and sociological factors affecting individuals (Winters-Miner et al., 2015) and includes education, income, occupation, and residence (Olaniyi et al., 2023). While high aspirations are beneficial, disparities in achievement for those from lower socioeconomic or minority backgrounds challenge this notion (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). Financial constraints in lower SES families limit children's exposure and aspirations (Gomez, 2014). Family impacts children's sociological and psychological development, influencing their societal role and labor market participation. The family's SES shapes children's lifestyles and opportunities, affecting their aspirations

(Nadenge, 2015). Children's vocational choices often reflect their family's SES, impacting their personal preferences (Jamabo, 2014).

Socioeconomic background influences career paths, especially among those from lower SES, leading them towards more practical careers (Schoon & Parsons, 2002; Marjoribanks, 2002; Howard et al., 2011). In Port Harcourt, Nigeria, a study showed parents' socioeconomic status significantly affects adolescents' vocational aspirations, suggesting children should be allowed to explore beyond their family's situation (Jamabo, 2014). In Ekpoma, Nigeria, parental occupation was found to significantly affect children's career aspirations, advising against parents imposing their aspirations on their children (Ehigbor & Akinlosotu, 2016). Lastly, children's inability to pursue higher education due to lack of resources, despite high aspirations, reflects the importance of socioeconomic background in educational attainment (Gutman & Akerman, 2008).

A longitudinal study carried out in Australia over the course of 3 years discovered interestingly that socioeconomic status may also affect enrolment at the higher education level. However, this does not indicate that lower SES children aspire differently than their counterparts from higher SES (Gore, Holmes, Smith, Southgate, & Albright, 2015).

Environmental Factors

Research reveals that career selection is influenced by multiple factors throughout an individual's growth, contrary to the belief that it's a solitary decision (Fisher & Griggs, 1995). Influences include parents, peers, teachers, cultural gender norms, academic experiences, self-efficacy, and adverse social events (Fisher & Griggs, 1995). This literature review investigates key factors affecting career decisions among the study population in Ibadan.

Parental Influence, Parental Involvement, Parental Encouragement and Career Aspiration

The family plays a foundational role in a child's socialization and future decision-making, with parents significantly shaping their children's career choices (Smith, 2020; Johnson, 2021; Clark, 2022). The extent of parental and family support is a crucial determinant of children's career aspirations, often paralleling or exceeding the influence of schools and peers (Mesa, 2013; Kala, 2015). However, not all parental involvement is positive; restrictive or negative influences from parents can limit children's career explorations (Williams, 2022).

Research highlights the importance of a supportive parent-child relationship in career decision-making (Olagbaju & Olaniyi, 2023). Positive relationships increase the likelihood of children choosing careers with traits similar to their parents, while also shaping their professional interests and aspirations (Tziner et al., 2012; Alphonse, 2016). Notably, the educational level of parents, especially mothers, and the occupation of fathers emerge as significant factors in guiding children's career paths, while socioeconomic status has a less direct impact (Alphonse, 2016; Tziner et al., 2012).

Parental influence on career choices varies, with differences noted between rural and urban adolescents' future ambitions and the impacts of socioeconomic status, particularly on girls from higher-income families (Taylor, 2002; Bhattacharya, 2013). Collaborative efforts between parents and career counselors are advocated to better guide students' career decisions (Mwaa, 2016). The global scenario reflects similar patterns, with studies from China and Germany linking parental support with positive career and educational outcomes (Ma & Yeh, 2010; Mayhack & Kracke, 2010). Overall, the

research underscores the complex yet critical role of parental influence in children's academic and career development, advocating for a balanced approach involving support from parents, teachers, and peers (Alika & Egbochuku, 2009; Alika, 2010).

School Environment and Career Aspirations

The stage-environment fit theory suggests that students, especially in middle grades, achieve better academically and in life when their school environment meets their needs (Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989). Dave (1965) sees the school environment as crucial for educational success, influencing children's self-efficacy and career aspirations. This aligns with broader views that environments shape individual development, particularly cognitive growth, with schools playing a critical role next to the home in a child's socialization (Smith & Taylor, 1972).

Wilson and Wilson (1992) argue that schools should boost students' aspirations, reinforcing the importance of a nurturing educational setting. Similarly, Bashir & Kaur (2017) found that the school environment significantly affects student aspirations, regardless of whether students are from rural or urban areas. However, a study by Ahlen, Dimitrova, and Ferrer-Wreder (2018) indicated a negative link between school climate and educational aspirations, conflicting with Gupta and Bashir (2017), who highlighted the environment as a key determinant of aspirations. This illustrates the intricate interplay between various factors and aspirations in educational contexts.

Perceived Academic Ability and Career Aspirations

Holly (2005) demonstrated that personal interests and academic strengths significantly guide students' career choices, emphasizing the alignment of personal aptitudes with career paths (Holly, 2005). Kaur (2012) found intelligence, not gender or school type, to be a crucial factor in shaping career aspirations, suggesting targeted support for high-intelligence students (Kaur, 2012). Scott (2010) linked educational aspirations to career success, stressing the role of self-belief in achieving professional goals (Scott, 2010).

Role models significantly influence career aspirations, with young individuals often mirroring the careers of parents or guardians (Merton, 1957; Morgenroth, Ryan, & Peters, 2015). Peer influence also plays a critical role, with age and social circles notably impacting career decisions (Naz et al., 2014; Hellen, Omari, & Mong'are, 2017). Teachers' influence varies, with some studies highlighting their role as significant mentors in the career decision process (Holly, 2005; Adeyemi, 2009). However, the literature still lacks in areas, particularly regarding the career aspirations among primary school children and specific peer and teacher influences (Kaur, 2012; Scott, 2010).

Theoretical Framework

The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

The study adapts the social cognitive theory which was developed by Albert Bandura (1986) and advanced by Robert W. Lent, Steven D. Brown and Gail Hackett (1994).

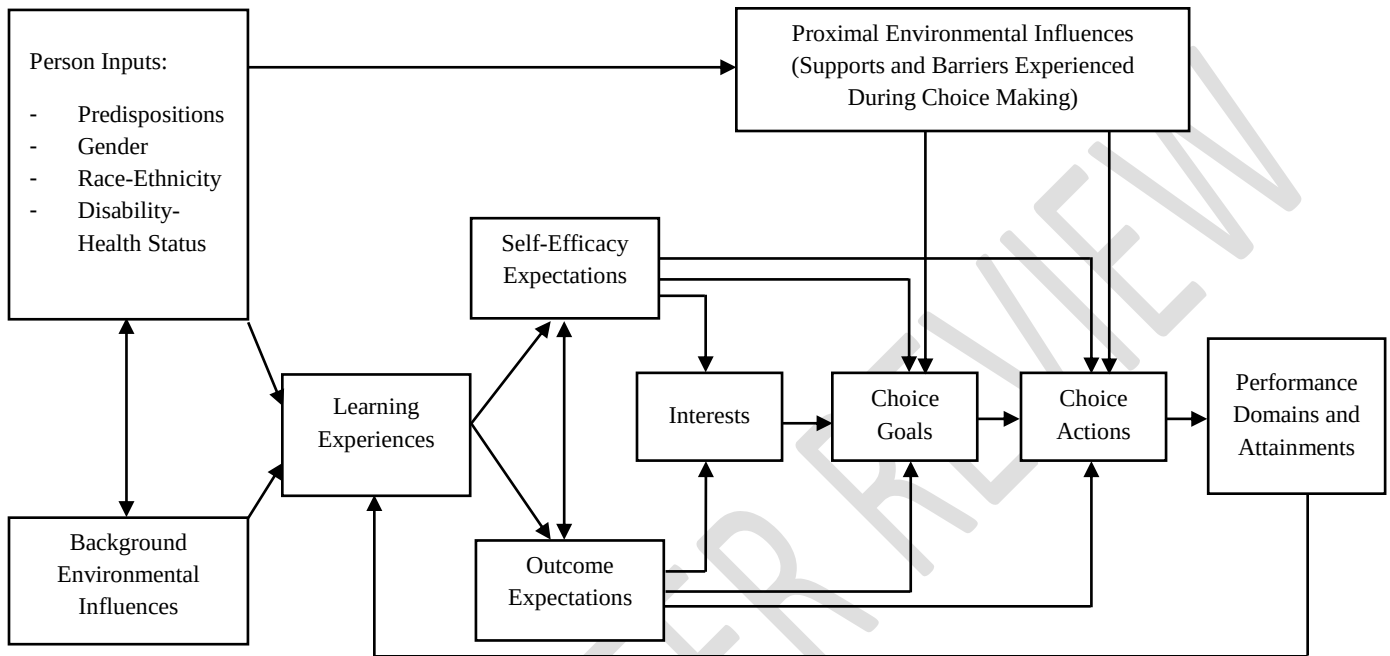


FIGURE 1: A holistic framework of how career interests, choice and action develop over time (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994)

Social cognitive theory posits that goals are inextricably connected to self-efficacy and outcome expectations. People set goals that are aligned with their inherent belief in their ability to achieve the goals which are the expectations of the consequences.

The most important application of the SCCT to this study is its focus on how interests develop, choices are formed, goals are set and the factors that facilitate the career development journey. It is evident from research that attempts are made to develop career interests from the childhood and adolescent stages. These career interests are usually tentative and shaped by several factors as children and adolescents grow to become adults.

As highlighted by the theory, development of interest is the first step in the entire career development process. One of the most important outcomes of the research is to identify the career choices or preferences of the children and this basically projects their interests.

The study then proceeds to the elicitation of the possible reasons for these interests and the factors responsible for them. Being guided by previous studies, the researcher endeavoured to identify the most important of these factors with the intention to test their relevance in the study area.

The study examines how interests of primary school pupils are formed, the role of academic ability, socioeconomic status and other environmental factors as reinforcers or inhibitors of the pursuit of such

interests. It also endeavours to understand how realistic the primary school pupils are as explained by Lewin's typology of aspirations and the effect of outcome expectations on these career choices.

Key Aspects of Career Development:

The Social Cognitive Career Theory elucidates three pivotal facets of career development: the formation of academic and career interests, the decision-making process in educational and career contexts, and the achievement of academic and career success (Bandura, 1997).

Foundational Concepts:

Self-efficacy Belief: This is the confidence in one's abilities to undertake specific actions successfully (Bandura, 1997). It varies across different activities and evolves over time.

Outcome Expectations: These are an individual's anticipations regarding the results of their actions, influencing their choices (Bandura, 1997).

Personal Goals: Set by individuals, these goals direct their engagement in various activities, influenced by their self-efficacy and expected outcomes (Bandura, 1997).

Core Models of SCCT:

Interest Model: Describes how exposure to different activities can mold individuals' career interests from an early age, influenced by cultural and contextual factors (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994).

Choice Model: Extends the Interest Model, arguing that self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and interests shape individuals' educational and career choices (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000).

Performance Model: Focuses on the factors contributing to the success in academic and career objectives, emphasizing the roles of ability, self-efficacy, and goals (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000).

Application of SCCT to Research:

The SCCT is instrumental in understanding the development of career interests from early stages, the formation of career choices, and the delineation of goals. It highlights the influence of academic ability, socioeconomic status, and environmental factors on the career development path, underscoring the need to explore the formation and realism of career aspirations among children and adolescents, and how these are affected by outcome expectations.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design, suitable for an in-depth examination of the targeted phenomenon, enabling a detailed representation of influences on pupils' career aspirations in select primary schools in Ibadan, Oyo State. It adopted a qualitative approach, using in-depth interviews and an unstructured guide for data collection, aiming to elicit detailed information from participants (Adelekan, 2016).

Population of the Study

The research population encompassed final and penultimate year students from selected private and public primary schools in Ibadan, specifically targeting pupils aged 8-14 in primary five and six, across two local government areas: Ibadan North East and Lagelu.

Study Area

Ibadan, the capital city of Oyo State and a significant urban center, served as the study area. It is known for its dense population and a large number of educational institutions, making it an ideal location for this study (Adelekan, 2016).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study sampled forty-eight (48) pupils from four schools, maintaining gender balance and ensuring representation from both local government areas. Simple random sampling was used for selecting local governments, while convenience sampling was employed for choosing schools due to the research timing. Purposive and snowball sampling were utilized for selecting pupils from private and public schools respectively, reflecting the study's adaptability to the local educational context.

Table 1: Sample Size

N=48					
Local Government	Name of School	Status (Private or Public)	Respondents		Grand Total
			Pupils		
			Primary 5	Primary 6	
North East Local	City Model School	Private	6	6	12
	IMG Primary School	Public	6	6	12
Lagelu Local Government	Fruitful vine primary school	Private	6	6	12
	Ope Odu community school	Public	6	6	12
	Total		24	24	48

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Data Collection Method and Instrument

Data were collected through unstructured, in-depth interviews, allowing for a thorough exploration of pupil opinions. The timing for interviews was carefully planned to ensure participants' comfort and willingness to share detailed responses.

Administration of the Instrument

The administration involved three research assistants trained by the researcher to ensure consistent data collection practices, with interviews conducted following ethical guidelines and after obtaining necessary consents.

Method of Data Analysis

Transcription followed by thematic content analysis was the chosen method for data interpretation, enabling the identification of significant trends, patterns, and themes from the collected data.

Ethical Consideration

The study adhered strictly to ethical standards, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and respect for participant privacy and opinions, ensuring a respectful and ethical research environment.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

The objectives of the study provided guidance for generation of data from the field. Using in-depth interview as the data collection technique, forty-eight (48) primary school pupils were interviewed with an unstructured interview guide which was transcribed and thematically analyzed using content analysis. The introductory part of the data presentation reveals the sociodemographic attributes of the participants followed by chronologically arranged data presentation in line with the research objectives.

The research observed the types of career aspirations pupils have to determine if trends or diversity of opinions could be established. Mainly, it sought to identify the various factors that are responsible for the career aspirational goals specified by the children. The independent variables were discovered from literature reviewed with the aim to elicit how these variables interplay within the Nigerian context, focusing on Ibadan, Oyo State.

Sociodemographic Information of Participants

Age Distribution of Participants

The study aimed at pupils between the age of 8 and 14. Out of the total sample population, 15 (31.3%) were aged 10, 11 (22.9%) were aged 9, 8 (16.7%) were aged 8, 6 (12.5%) were aged 11, 5 (10.4%) were aged 12 and 3 (6.3%) were aged 13. The modal age within the study sample is 10 and the oldest participants (13 years old) were all from public schools (3). The mean age of the private school participants is 9.38 with a standard deviation of 1.313 while the mean age of the public school participants is 10.54 with a standard deviation of 1.318.

This means that the private school pupils finish primary school earlier than their public school counterparts.

Table 2. AGE DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS BASED ON SCHOOL TYPE

		School Type		Total
		Private	Public	
Age	10	5	10	15
	11	3	3	6
	12	2	3	5
	13	0	3	3
	8	8	0	8
	9	6	5	11
Total		24	24	48

Source: Researcher's filed survey (2019)

School Type of the Participants

For adequate representation of opinions, 24 (50%) of the sample population were selected from private primary schools, 12 participants from each local government and 24 (50%) of the sample population was selected from public primary schools, 12 participants from each local government.

Class of the Participants

The study sample consisted of final and penultimate-year pupils in public and private primary schools in the two local governments. From each school, 6 penultimate and 6 final year students were selected, making a total of 24 each.

Sex of the Participants

The study aimed for equal gender representation, hence, following the methodology, the study sample recorded 50% female and 50% male. Out of the 6 that were selected in each class, 3 were female and 3 were male. This means that 6 female and 6 male participants were selected from each school.

The Career Aspirations of Pupils

Table 3. CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Artist	1	2.1	2.1	2.1
	Banker	3	6.3	6.3	8.3
	Doctor	14	29.2	29.2	37.5
	Engineer	5	10.4	10.4	47.9
	Fire fighter	1	2.1	2.1	50.0
	Footballer	3	6.3	6.3	56.3
	Hairdresser	1	2.1	2.1	58.3
	Lawyer	2	4.2	4.2	62.5
	Mechanic	2	4.2	4.2	66.7
	Nurse	4	8.3	8.3	75.0
	Pharmacist	1	2.1	2.1	77.1
	Pilot	2	4.2	4.2	81.3
	Police	1	2.1	2.1	83.3
	Mathematics Professor	1	2.1	2.1	85.4
	Soldier	4	8.3	8.3	93.8
	Tailor	1	2.1	2.1	95.8
	Teacher	2	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	48	100.0	100.0	

Source: Researcher's filed survey (2019)

Table 4. CAREER EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENT AND GENDER

		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Educational Requirement	high	15	13	28
	low	3	6	9
	medium	6	5	11
Total		24	24	48

Source: Researcher's filed survey (2019)

Table 4 reveals that more females (15) aspire for career types that require high level of education and more males (6) aspire for career types that require low level of education.

Table 5. CAREER EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENT AND SCHOOL TYPE

		School Type		Total
		Private	Public	
Educational Requirement	high	17	11	28
	low	3	6	9
	medium	4	7	11
Total		24	24	48

Source: Researcher's filed survey (2019)

Table 5 reveals that more private school participants (17) aspire for career types that require high level of education and more public school participants (6) aspire for career types that require low level of education.

Gender and Career Aspiration of Final and Penultimate year Pupils in Ibadan, Oyo State

Table 6. GENDER AND CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	
Career Aspiration	Artist	0	1	1
	Banker	1	2	3
	Doctor	10	4	14
	Engineer	0	5	5
	Fire fighter	0	1	1
	Footballer	1	2	3
	Hairdresser	1	0	1
	Lawyer	2	0	2
	Mechanic	0	2	2
	Nurse	4	0	4
	Pharmacist	1	0	1
	Pilot	0	2	2
	Police	0	1	1
	Mathematics Professor	1	0	1
	Soldier	0	4	4
	Tailor	1	0	1
	Teacher	2	0	2
Total		24	24	48

Source: Researcher's filed survey (2019)

Discussion of Findings

The most popular career aspiration of the participants is "medical doctor" (29.2%) which is not gender-dependent, followed by engineer (10.5%), nurse (8.3%) and soldier (8.3%). However, some of the exploration of career aspirations among school-aged children in Ibadan, Oyo State, reveals a multifaceted interplay of factors influenced by gender, socio-economic status, environmental conditions, and familial dynamics. Gender emerges as a significant determinant of career aspirations. Boys often expressed interest in physically demanding professions such as engineering, mechanics, and law enforcement, reflecting traditional masculine roles. In contrast, girls tended to aspire to professions perceived as more nurturing or aesthetic, like nursing, teaching, and hairdressing. However, there are signs of evolving gender norms, as some girls expressed interest in traditionally male-dominated fields such as mathematics and sports.

Children's career choices were profoundly influenced by personal preferences and interests, highlighting the intrinsic motivation behind their aspirations. Boys generally cited practical reasons like innovation and security for their occupational choices, whereas girls were more likely to express emotional and empathetic reasons, such as a desire to care for others. The socio-economic status (SES) of the children appeared to have a limited direct impact on their career aspirations. Despite coming from lower SES backgrounds, many public school students maintained high aspirations, suggesting that children's ambitions are not solely determined by their current circumstances. However, the aspirations of children from lower SES backgrounds often mirrored more immediate, attainable goals compared to those from higher SES backgrounds, possibly reflecting a more pragmatic approach to their future.

Home environment and parental education level did not significantly alter the children's career goals, suggesting that aspirations are not directly correlated with current living conditions or parental educational attainment. Nonetheless, parental influence played a critical role, with children often looking up to their parents as role models, regardless of the parents' educational or professional background. Peer influence also contributed to shaping career aspirations, underscoring the social nature of children's vocational development. Friends' career choices and attitudes could sway a child's own aspirations, highlighting the significance of peer groups in the formation of career identities.

The role of education and teachers was universally acknowledged. All participants recognized the importance of education in achieving their career goals, viewing it as a critical pathway to success. Teachers, particularly those favored by students, played a significant role in guiding and motivating children's aspirations, albeit not always directly in terms of career advice. The research underscores the complexity of career aspiration development among children, pointing to a web of interacting influences from personal interests and familial guidance to social interactions and educational experiences. These findings illuminate the diverse factors contributing to the shaping of young individuals' future professional ambitions.

This research explored the career aspirations of final and penultimate year students in Ibadan, Oyo State, primarily aged between 8 and 14. It aimed to understand their career choices and the influencing factors, comparing findings with existing literature. The study revealed high career aspirations among pupils and their clear future occupational preferences. However, their reasons often showed naivety, reflecting early-formed, unrealistic perceptions about occupations (Chambers, Kashefpakdel, Rehill, & Percy, 2018; Moulton, 2016). Contrary to Kintrea, St Clair, & Houston (2011), this study found that labor market conditions and parental expectations minimally impact children's aspirations.

The analysis showed a significant trend in gender-stereotyping affecting career aspirations, aligning with previous findings (Croll, Attwood, & Fuller, 2010; Chambers et al., 2018). Male students preferred scientific and engineering fields, while females opted for healthcare, teaching, and beauty-related roles. This gender discrepancy extends to high-prestige roles like astronaut or pilot, primarily favored by boys, highlighting potential societal or psychological barriers for girls (Phukan & Saikia, 2017; Mutekwe, Modiba, & Maphosa, 2011).

Socioeconomic status appeared to influence career aspirations variably. While many students aspired to prestigious jobs regardless of their background, a minority from lower socioeconomic backgrounds showed lower aspirations, possibly due to limited resources and opportunities (Mayhack & Kracke, 2010; Gomez, 2014).

Parental education and occupation showed mixed effects on children's aspirations. Unlike previous studies (Ehigbor & Akinlosotu, 2016; Munyingi, 2012), this research found limited correlation between parental careers and children's aspirations. Instead, children displayed a strong focus on education, influenced by perceived academic ability and familial support, rather than direct parental occupation.

Finally, role models, peer influence, and teacher relationships were significant in shaping career aspirations. Children were influenced by a range of role models and peers, underlining the importance of social environments in career decision-making processes (Naz et al., 2014; Gioia, 2017). However, the impact of school environment on career aspirations was found to be negligible, challenging previous assumptions (Bashir & Kaur, 2017).

Conclusion

The study revealed factors influencing the career aspirations of primary school children, emphasizing the importance of allowing children to express themselves freely. Despite facing various challenges, children exhibited high aspirations towards traditional and unconventional professions. The research highlighted the impact of gender-role socialization and stereotyping, particularly affecting girls' career choices. Socioeconomic status (SES) showed mixed effects on career aspirations, with children from lower SES backgrounds aspiring similarly to their higher SES counterparts, though parental education and occupation levels had varied impacts. The study also examined the influence of perceived academic ability, family support, and the school environment, finding that these elements, except for the school environment, significantly affected career aspirations. Teachers, while respected, were found not to significantly influence the children's career choices. The study concluded that children's career aspirations are shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including gender socialization, socioeconomic status, academic ability, and family support. Gender plays a crucial role in shaping aspirations through stereotypical socialization processes. Socioeconomic status influences career aspirations both directly and indirectly by affecting children's exposure and access to resources. Children's academic self-perception strongly influences their career goals, aligning with the social cognitive career theory. Parental involvement and peer influence are pivotal, with peers providing a relatable source of support and influence. However, teachers, despite their respected status, have limited influence on children's career aspirations.

Recommendations

- Parents and teachers should give children enough confidence and freedom to discuss issues, especially related to career aspirations. The purpose of these conversations should, however, be to encourage diversity and not condemn their interest of the children. This will allow for a spread in the availability of talents across all sectors of the economy in the future.

- Effective career guidance and counseling should be integrated into the educational system and its curriculum from the primary school level so as to help people build on their passion for certain career aspirations to adulthood.
- There is need to properly capture the varieties of ways in which gender affects career aspirations from the tender ages of children. This should be done with the purpose of educating the general public on the positives of providing a level playing ground for both genders to thrive in intrinsically motivated career choices.
- Parents and teachers' awareness on the need to consciously guide the pupils on issues related to career should be raised. This will ensure that children understand the implication of their career preferences and the steps they need to consider to prepare the foundations needed to actualise these aspirational goals. If this is properly harnessed, negative peer influence on people's career aspirations may be drastically reduced at all levels.
- The direct and indirect influence of role models need to properly considered and monitored at all levels. To effectively realise this, mentorship programs should be integrated into the school system and parents should be consider matchmaking their children with close, trusted and well-respected personalities in their environment.
- Government needs to monitor the public schooling system to reflect and effect the international best practices needed to provide adequate and conducive learning environment for the children of the poor.
- More research, especially commissioned by the government should be done. A more specific recommendation is that longitudinal studies should be carried out to monitor the trend in the career aspirations of people from primary school to higher education.

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APPENDICES

Unstructured Interview Guide For Pupils

Aspirations of final and penultimate year pupils in some selected Primary schools in ibadan, oyo state

Dear Participant,

I am a postgraduate student of the above-named university and department, conducting a research on the above subject matter. I assure you that all the information obtained in this questionnaire will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thanking you for your anticipated cooperation.

Section A: Demographic Information

What is your age? _____

What class are you? _____

What is your sex? _____

What religion do you practice? _____

Section B: What are the Career Aspirations of Pupils

1. What do you aspire to become in life? Why?
2. How do you intend to become what you specified above? What do you think you need to become a(an) _____?

Section C: How Socioeconomic Status Affects the Career Aspiration of Pupils

1. Where do you live? Do you stay with your parents?
2. Pls describe your home environment.
3. What is the educational level of your parents?
4. Pls tell me the occupation of your parents?
5. Describe your house setting. Is your father married to more than one wife? What type of house do you live in? Do you have a room to yourself?

Section D: How Perceived Academic Ability and Environmental Factors Affect Pupils' Career Aspirations

6. Do you like coming to school? Why? What were your grades in pry 3, pry 4, pry 5? What do you do after school when you get home? Do you study? When? What are your best subjects? **(Perceived Academic Ability)**
7. Do you like talking with your parents? Are your parents always after your performance and success? Do you do extra lessons? Do they ask about your assignments? Do they monitor your grades in school? Do they talk to you about career? **(Parental encouragement)**
8. Do you like talking to your parents? Do your parents help you with your assignments? Do they teach you the things you don't understand in school? Have your parents scolded you because of your school grades? Do they buy you things when you do well in school? If you don't study, what do they do? Do they help you create reading plans and ensure you stick with it? **(Parental Involvement)**

9. Pls tell me about your school environment. Do you like your school? Why or why not? How many are you in your class? **(School environment)**
10. Who are the people you look up to in your environment and why? **(Models)**
11. Pls tell me about your siblings and their lifestyle and current engagements. Are they still in school or already working? What are they studying and where? What do they do?
12. Do you love your father/mother's occupation? Do you want to be like them? **(Parental influence)**
13. Do any of your friends want to become what you specified? **(Peer Influence)**

Section E: Role of Teachers in the Formation and Actualisation of Career

Aspirations

14. Who is the teacher you like the most and why? Do you like your teacher? Does he flog you? Does he teach you well? Do you understand when he teaches you?
15. Does your he/she advise you?
16. Pls tell me some career advice that he has given you